

SLAVE LABOR COMMEMORATIVE MARKER

EMANCIPATION HALL • LOWER LEVEL



This marker acknowledges the role that enslaved laborers played in the construction of the United States Capitol. From the time the Capitol's cornerstone was set in 1793 until the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, enslaved laborers performed many skilled construction jobs, such as quarrying the stone that comprises many of the Capitol's floors, walls, and columns.

The marker is comprised of a block of sandstone that was quarried from Aquia Creek in Virginia. It was once a part of the East Front portico, which was completed in 1826. The stone is presented in reverse position to feature its original chisel marks.

U.S. CAPITOL
Visitor Center

One Hundred Eleventh Congress
of the
United States of America
AT THE FIRST SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday,
the sixth day of January, two thousand and nine*

Concurrent Resolution

Whereas enslaved African-Americans provided labor essential to the construction of the United States Capitol;

Whereas the report of the Architect of the Capitol entitled "History of Slave Laborers in the Construction of the United States Capitol" documents the role of slave labor in the construction of the Capitol;

Whereas enslaved African-Americans performed the backbreaking work of quarrying the stone which comprised many of the floors, walls, and columns of the Capitol;

Whereas enslaved African-Americans also participated in other facets of construction of the Capitol, including carpentry, masonry, carting, rafting, roofing, plastering, glazing, painting, and sawing;

Whereas the marble columns in the Old Senate Chamber and the sandstone walls of the East Front corridor remain as the lasting legacies of the enslaved African-Americans who worked the quarries;

Whereas slave-quarried stones from the remnants of the original Capitol walls can be found in Rock Creek Park in the District of Columbia;

Whereas the Statue of Freedom now atop the Capitol dome could not have been cast without the pivotal intervention of Philip Reid, an enslaved African-American foundry worker who deciphered the puzzle of how to separate the 5-piece plaster model for casting when all others failed;

Whereas the great hall of the Capitol Visitor Center was named Emancipation Hall to help acknowledge the work of the slave laborers who built the Capitol;

Whereas no narrative on the construction of the Capitol that does not include the contribution of enslaved African-Americans can fully and accurately reflect its history;

Whereas recognition of the contributions of enslaved African-Americans brings to all Americans an understanding of the continuing evolution of our representative democracy; and

Whereas a marker dedicated to the enslaved African-Americans who helped to build the Capitol will reflect the charge of the Capitol Visitor Center to teach visitors about Congress and its development: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),

**SECTION 1. PLACEMENT OF MARKER IN CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER
TO ACKNOWLEDGE ROLE OF SLAVE LABOR IN
CONSTRUCTION OF CAPITOL.**

(a) **PROCUREMENT AND PLACEMENT OF MARKER.**—The Architect of the Capitol, subject to the approval of the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, shall design, procure, and place in a prominent location in Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center a marker which acknowledges the role that slave labor played in the construction of the United States Capitol.

(b) **CRITERIA FOR DESIGN OF MARKER.**—In developing the design for the marker required under subsection (a), the Architect of the Capitol—

(1) shall take into consideration the recommendations developed by the Slave Labor Task Force Working Group;

(2) shall, to the greatest extent practicable, ensure that the marker includes stone which was quarried by slaves in the construction of the Capitol; and

(3) shall ensure that the marker includes a plaque or inscription which describes the purpose of the marker.